

ENTERTAINMENT

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Great advances in musical navigation



By Mac Carbone / TURNING NORMAN RECORDS

Drifting Through (L to R: Randall Kirsch, Everett Bolton, Paul Madigan, Jay Doyle, Brian Werner) will bring their blend of rock and refined jam back to Atlanta on July 27, performing at Smith's Olde Bar.

By Alan Back

Notepad, camera, sledgehammer...

In the world of popular music, few innovations have had more effect than the jam session. Some bands fool around after hours to let off all their excess energy, while others prefer to do it in front of audiences and take a chance on sounding like boneheads. And there are some, like the Raleigh outfit Drifting Through, that have learned to channel that enthusiasm and create a sound that appeals to fans of disciplined playing and free-spirited improvisation alike.

The current began to move in 1993, when lead singer Randall Kirsch and bassist Everett Bolton started playing together during

their freshman year at Wake Forest University. Guitarist Jay Doyle fetched up on shore two years later, and Drifting Through was born as a trio.

In late 1997, having graduated and moved to Raleigh, they met keyboardist Brian Werner and drummer Paul Madigan. These two transplanted New Yorkers, who were playing in the band Mojo at the time, would soon find themselves recruited for emergency duty. The drummer who had been working with Kirsch's group got a pink slip just before they were to enter a competition to find a local band to play on the side stage at the 1998 H.O.R.D.E. tour.

"We were totally in between when we had to play this thing, so we called them because we

knew they were really good. We did, I guess, four or five rehearsals before that show. It just clicked and felt great," Kirsch commented. Drifting Through expanded to a quintet after Mojo broke up; they now have an EP, *Extended Play* (1998), and a full-length album, *Spell* (2000), to their credit.

Spell neatly reflects the influences and perspectives of the five players, while still blending them into a coherent whole and presenting them in a more radio-friendly manner than was done on *Extended Play*. The EP drew considerable media attention, but more than a few critics pigeonholed the band as just another group of noodlers—a response that prompted them to reconsider what they wanted

to do with their next effort.

"There's sort of a stigma to the jam genre—it's been done so well by one or two bands, but done very badly by 1,000 others," Kirsch said. "We really wanted to make [*Spell*] an album and focus more on the songs being what they were, rather than on the jam." He added that they set out to find the best way to separate live performance from studio work and determine how to deal with each.

This year's effort showcases the band's new approach to the latter, venturing into several areas of pop and rock. "Twilight" carries overtones of Blues Traveler's mellower work, while the acoustic vibe of "Stained Glass Window" recalls the early Dave Matthews Band recordings. The juice flows freely for the Allman Brothers/Black Crowes guitar harmonies of "Centerline," and "Shade" feels as if it could break into an open jam at any moment thanks to Werner's organ romping.

Concerning this eclectic mix and his contributions to it, Kirsch explained, "I don't necessarily think I have to shut those doors; I'd rather keep them open and write from a bunch of different standpoints and styles. The great thing about Drifting Through is that I can take these songs to them and they can play in all the styles, and there's a good feel in all of them. We really enjoy the variety, and it makes for a much more exciting live show to keep changing things

See *Drifting Through*, page 14

Feature *The Matrix* DVD

'*The Matrix*' DVD offers quality entertainment

By Jayson Wehrend
Entertainment staff

If you never saw *The Matrix*, where were you during 1999? Tons of people saw it, and (most shocking of all) almost everyone loved it. Quite an impressive feat, considering the main character is Keanu Reeves. In the movie, Neo (Keanu Reeves) is a brilliant computer hacker who discovers our world is not what it seems. With the aid of Morpheus (Laurence Fishburne) and Trinity (Carrie-Anne Moss), Neo attempts to destroy the system that controls humanity. Combining an interesting story with an innovative use of special effects, *The Matrix* holds plenty of replay value.

Video: For a \$200 million blockbuster, I expected the video quality to be as close to the theater as possible. Having seen the movie 6 times in the theaters (liking a movie isn't a crime) I was fully prepared to detect any discrepancies in quality. Happily, I report no such problem. The picture is crystal clear; nary a scratch or pixel in sight. The black level was dead on; it was never too dark, and the image never looked washed out. A number of times during the movie, a green filter was placed over the lens. That muted green color comes out beautifully on DVD. The movie is presented in its original 2.35:1 aspect ratio, so you don't miss out on anything happening on the edges.

Audio: *The Matrix* really stands out from other eye-candy action flicks because of its dynamic use of sound. The DVD jumps right into the task of proving it's as good as its theatrical predecessor. The front sound stage has very nice sound separation. When characters move across the screen the sound follows them through the speakers. Guns fire from one speaker and bullets sweep across the center, impacting in the right speaker. The rear surrounds join in to pump out music, even more gunshots, and echoes of some of the larger sets. Many of the slow motion shots of guns firing put the sub to good use. The sound delay on the slow motion shots, coupled with the subwoofer's boom, makes the shots seem all the more powerful.

Extras: After the wonderful video and audio treatments, how do the extras stack up? Starting it all off is a feature-length, audio commentary with Moss, the editor, and the special effects supervisor. Moss was mostly quiet, but she did talk about the parts in the film she especially liked. The commentary offered good insight into how the movie was put together. I was particularly pleased to see that the film is automatically subtitled during the commentary.

Also included was a "making of" documentary. Running about 25 minutes long, it offered a look at the extensive work that went into making the martial arts fights scenes.

The next extra is titled "Follow the White Rabbit." When you select this, at nine different points in the film a white rabbit will pop up on the screen. If you hit enter on your remote, it will take you to a mini-documentary that explains how the scene was shot. You can access two hidden documentaries by clicking on the red pills in the menus. One of them goes to a five minute documentary called "What is Bullet-Time?" The second pill takes you to a feature called "What is Concept?" I would have really loved the original movie trailers and a commentary by the Wachowski brothers, but I can live with the extras I got.

B.B. King and Eric Clapton sing the blues

By Michael Epstein
Perfect Dark addict

Artist: B.B. King & Eric Clapton
Album: *Riding With the King*
Studio: Reprise
Tracks: 12
Running Time: 61:13
Genre: Rock/Blues
Rating: ★★

On *Riding With the King*, two of the greatest guitarists in history, Eric Clapton and B.B. King team up to produce an album that is good but not the exceptional piece of work that might be expected from men of their reputation.

King has been a legend since the fifties, while Clapton has, over time, become a legend in his own right. Both seem to have a way with the blues.

This album takes a "go with what you know" approach and is more blues experience than rock and roll experience. Most of the world's good blues songs have already been written. Therefore, there is not one original on the album, which is somewhat of a shame as it seems a full collaboration between King and Clapton would have produced some excellent results. Instead the album is merely a collection of their takes on these

songs.

First of all, it should be noted that, while *Riding With the King* is a musical collaboration between King and Clapton, Clapton might as well have not sung on the album. Basically, as far as vocals go, King easily steals the show. Indeed Clapton is a good singer in his own right, but he just cannot keep up with King's distinctive sound. On the other hand, King and Clapton seem to match each other's talents on the guitar, and it could be suspected that only those with excellent ears for the music of King, Clapton or both could tell the difference.

As for the album, King and Clapton work some real magic on *Riding With the King*. They do things with guitars seldom heard in music. Their blues make you feel like you are sitting in a smoky, hole-in-the-wall dive listening to some poor soul play out his heart, and that is a large part of the appeal of this album. It is also the main reason to recommend the purchase of this album. Collaborations like this do not come around every day. Be warned, though: not every track is worthy. Track four, "Marry you," just has too much of a pop edge to fit on the album.

There really are two main rea-



By Craig Mathew / REPRIS RECORDS

Eric Clapton and B.B. King love to sing the blues. Their project, "Riding with the King," is a collaboration of mellow blues remakes.

sons to purchase this album, and many people will not fit under either category. Primarily, fans of King, Clapton, or both will definitely want to add this disc to their collection. The second reason is how much one enjoys

mellow music.

This album is excellent study or relaxation music. Other than that, there is no major reason to buy this album, and one would be better suited to purchasing classic King.

